Climate Mental Health Network

CLIMATE MAMA

THIRD ACT

COGENERATE

Guide to Intergenerational Conversations about Climate Emotions

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Why?

We are living in an extremely age diverse time — yet we're more divided by age than ever. Climate change impacts people of all ages, and our responses and solutions require a wide range of perspectives, experiences, knowledge, work, and guidance across and between generations. A complex problem like climate change can only be addressed with the innovation and enthusiasm of youth, in collaboration with the resources, wisdom and experience of elders.

By building intergenerational relationships rooted in trust, intentionality and deep listening, we can ensure our diverse stories and feelings are fully heard. These conversations not only help us process the emotional weight of the climate crisis but strengthen our collective resilience. When we learn from the past, share honestly in the present, and collaborate across generations, we build the kind of ecosystem that can sustain meaningful climate action.

Purpose of These Conversations:

Building Emotional and Relational Grounding

- Sharing emotions can motivate climate action and emotional healing.
- Understand how climate anxiety and other climate emotions affect people of other generations.
- Mutual validation of concerns can ease anxiety.
- Practice empathy, curiosity, thoughtfulness and understanding.
- Intergenerational conversations can help us support each other by highlighting wisdom gained through our own lived experiences.

Listening and Learning

- Listen, hear and learn; resist rigidity.
- Learn lessons from the past and present.
- Value others' experiences and perspectives.
- Understand long-term, cyclical themes in climate and society from a new perspective.
- Combat ageism.

Building Solidarity and Relationships

- Relationship building is solidarity work.
- Invite people in—learn to engage rather than be a gatekeeper.
- To feel less alone, grow a wide web of support.
- Find new and diverse allies in climate work—connection across age also connects us across other kinds of difference.
- Work together to reimage goals and strategies around climate activism from an intergenerational lens.

Empowerment and Inclusion

- Anyone can be a mentor—the benefits of intergenerational conversation flow both ways.
- Bring cultural and material power together.
- Share power by reimagining who leads, who supports, and who is included.

Practical Support

- Where possible, expand access to resources and connections that can help grow funding and build structural support.
- Learn to resource communities, not just causes.
- Develop skills and resources for confronting mental health challenges.

Starting the Conversation:

Intergenerational conversations about climate emotions can happen wherever people of different ages gather, reflect, or connect together. It could be in work and organizational settings like a team meeting or conference community or spaces like a neighborhood association, book group, or faith based gathering. Think about the intergenerational relationships in your life. Examples include grandparent and grandchild, nephew and aunt, mentor and mentee, teacher and student, co-workers, hobby and activities friends and more. If you're not naturally crossing paths with people of different generations, it may take intentional effort. Look around—there are likely older and younger people in your community who don't often connect but would have a lot to offer each other. How can you create more opportunities for these interactions? Do you think about climate change as an intergenerational issue? Do you imagine that your feelings around climate change are different from the older or younger people in your circles? Who do you tend to share your climate emotions with?

Questions to Guide Intergenerational Climate Emotions Conversations:

1. What emotions do you feel most strongly when you think about the impacts of climate change?

> Take turns sharing your feelings and emotions. Compare your responses. What emotions rise to the surface for both people? Are these feelings related to your age?

2. Think about your hometown (whatever that conjures for you). How has climate change impacted the people, the vegetation and animals who live there? What about the buildings, institutions or social groups? *How do these changes make you feel? Take turns sharing your reflections and compare your responses. How do reflections vary across age? Has the older person's hometown changed more?*

Other Questions to Consider:

- *Was there a moment in your life that made the climate crisis feel real to you? How old were you?*
- *How do you think your generation was taught to think about the future?*

- *How do you cope with your emotions around climate change? Is sharing like this normal for you?*
- *How do generational values influence climate priorities—and how can they complement each other?*
- *What has each generation taught us about resilience, responsibility, and transformation in the face of climate change?*
- *How can older and younger people support each other emotionally while acting together to address climate change?*
- *How can we think about intergenerational solidarity with the natural world (plants, trees, animals, etc.)*

How are your answers similar and different? What are the reasons you might imagine for the similarities and the differences? (i.e. Generally, younger generations more easily and openly embrace conversations on mental health and wellbeing.)

Additional Resources

Call on Intergenerational Solidarity
Can Intergenerational Connection Heal Us?
Cogenerational Social Healing
Dear Tomorrow
Generations unite to address loneliness, climate change, other global challenges
Helping youth move from climate anxiety to climate action
Intergenerational Approaches to Climate Action
Intergenerational Relations in the Climate Movement: Bridging the Gap toward a Common Goal
Intergenerational Conversation - Facilitator's Toolkit
The Lancet: Climate Emotions, Thoughts and Plans Among US Adolescents and Young Adults
Third Act Eldering Series